

THE VICTORIAN WALLPAPER DESIGN COLORING BOOK



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Ramona Jablonski

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Jablonski, Ramona, 1939-

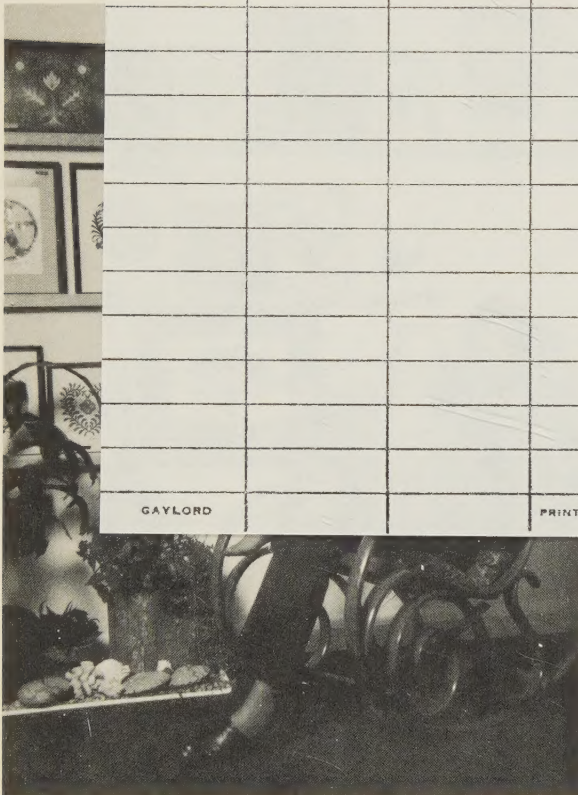
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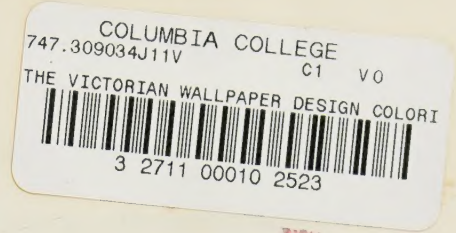
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Photograph by Charles L. Smith

Ramona Jablonski is one of the foremost authorities on the art of paper design. Her interest began when she married into a Polish family and began to study the beauty of Polish *Wycinanki* patterns. Previously she had been involved in commercial art and advertising.

Born and reared in Kansas City, Missouri, she attended Kansas City Art Institute as a child, was graduated from Washington University School of Fine Arts in St. Louis, Missouri with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, and now lives in Baltimore, Maryland with her husband and three children. In addition to teaching the art of papercut design, she is a commercial textile designer. Her previous books, *The Paper Cut-Out Design Book* and *The Chinese Cut-Out Design Coloring Book* (in two volumes) have also been published by Stemmer House.

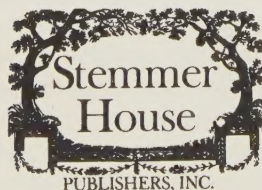


The International Design Library™

THE VICTORIAN WALLPAPER DESIGN COLORING BOOK

COLUMBIA COLLEGE LIBRARY

Ramona Jablonski



Owings Mills, Maryland

ENTERED DEC 11 1989

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: Wallpaper panel, "Le Jardin d'Armide," designed by Charles Muller c. 1854 and produced by Desfosse et Karth, a French firm of the period. It is reproduced by permission of the Gallier House Collection, New Orleans, Louisiana. *Photograph by Frank Miller.*

A Barbara Holdridge book

Printed and bound in the United States of America

First Edition

F-PH-A. 747.309034 J11v

Jablonski, Ramona, 1939-

The Victorian wallpaper
design coloring book



Introduction

THE VICTORIAN WALLPAPER DESIGNS reproduced in this book are embodied in advertisements prepared by the first advertising entrepreneur in America, the remarkable Charles Austin Bates. Emanating from New York City, these wallpaper advertisements inspired merchants all over the country to carry styles similar to those depicted here, and thus to influence the taste of Americans in interior design.

Charles Austin Bates was a man of immense energy, and his story is a purely American one. Born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1866, he could claim ancestry back to Clement Bates, an Englishman who settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1638.

His mother, Margaret Holmes Ernsperger, must have set the pace for him, as she was a writer of fiction, and quite successful. His public-school education in Indianapolis was augmented by working in a local book and stationery store. He always claimed, later, that the knowledge of retailing, and especially the knowledge of papers, that he learned in that job were invaluable assets to him.

Being a bookstore clerk did not contain his energies for long. At the age of twenty he established a company that published all of the programs for theaters in Indianapolis. Before long he had to buy a printing plant to handle the business. He branched out into composing and printing all kinds of advertisements for every conceivable kind of business, and saw to their placement in every kind of publication. He carried on his publishing/printing business for seven years.

By 1893 he needed wider horizons, and took himself to New York City, with the idea of devoting himself entirely to writing advertisements. He started with a one-desk office on the sixth floor of the Vanderbilt Building, and within eight years had an advertising firm that covered one entire floor and part of another at 132 Nassau Street. It had a printing plant in Franklin Square that employed nearly 100 people, and branch offices in eight major cities.

Early in his New York career, Bates began editing a "Department of Criticism" in *Printer's Ink* and other trade journals. His technical experience was helpful to the subscribers, and their practical experiences added to his knowledge.

He began his own monthly trade paper, *Current Advertising*. In one issue from 1902, chosen at random, there were ten full pages, advertising what he had to offer. There was Bates Advertising Company, Bates Advertising Company Printers, The Bates Advertising Company Outdoor Department and the Foreign Department, ready to place advertisement in any periodical in the world. You could send for a copy of his plan "by which in the easiest, quickest, and most inexpensive manner you can gain a complete, practical knowledge of the advertising business." And four full pages were devoted to selling his six-volume set (400 pages each), called *The Art and Literature of Business*. On these four pages he gave his entire professional history, as qualification for writing such a work.

"Many very excellent printers are not able to give proper advertising value to their work, however mechanically competent they may be.

"Write to me about it. . . ."

He believed that advertising was a business, not guesswork. To this end, he encouraged the keeping of records. What were the receipts before the advertisement, what were the receipts after? What did the ad cost? Was it worthwhile? Could it be made better? Should another approach be tried?

He believed in the intelligence of the public and their ability to spot a fraud or a genuine bargain. If you had a bargain to offer to induce business into the store, you were to point out that it was your judicious buying that made the bargain available to them.

He believed that advertising should above all things be true—in letter and in spirit. All you needed to do was to discover that one fact that made your store or product unique and therefore more desirable, then harp on that fact.

Harping was very big with Charles Bates. He pointed out that people needed to be constantly reminded. If you took all of your advertising budget and blew it on one big spectacular ad, no matter how eye-appealing and memorable it was, the fickle public would soon forget. Better to take out a smaller space (always in the best paper in town), but take it every day, changing the look of your ad every day if possible, constantly reminding that your establishment is there, and what it has to offer.

To this end he prepared a subscription service, based upon a series of books designed for the retail merchants in seventeen different trades, from selling real estate and insurance to selling wallpaper.

For his \$25 subscription price, the merchant would receive a book of some 220 pages chock full of advice on how to merchandise wallpaper, drugs, men's clothing, coal, laundry service, etc., and over 150 fully made-up ads—copy and illustration or just copy alone. In addition, he was given a book of 230 coupons. One coupon entitled him to a letter of criticism and advice about his advertising. Another gave him a year's subscription to Bates' trade journal, "Good Advertising." There were one or two others and the remainder were to be sent in one at a time along with payment for each "cut"—each illustration he wished to purchase, prepared as a copper-plated woodblock.

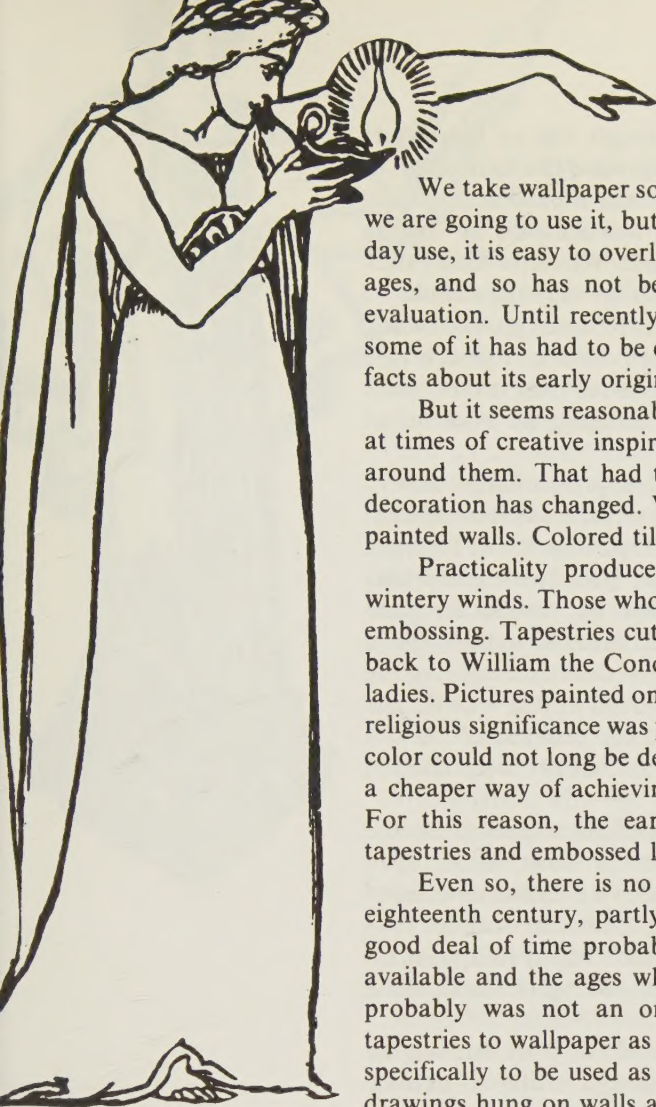
The idea of the series was to give busy retailers a quick and reliable way to create frequent and, hopefully, effective advertisements for their businesses. In the book, each ad was displayed alone on a page with plenty of blank space around it to jot notes for changes or additions. The merchant would send for his cut, quickly note changes, then tear the page out and send it to the printer. The coupon system made it self-limiting.

The ads themselves well illustrated Bates's advertising philosophy and style. Each addressed one subject, dwelled on it and avoided generalizing. The illustrations were chosen for simplicity and clarity in reproduction. They all featured elements that Bates found acceptable to illustrate in advertising: the product itself (with a picture of it and/or its use), a "really handsome and alluring woman" (preferably relating in some way to the product), little children, allegorical pictures emphasizing some particular point in favor of the product, historical characters or objects of interest, such as the Sphinx, the Rock of Gibraltar, etc., for which some parallel was supposed to exist. If you must picture your building, he advised, make it a truthful picture. And steer clear of supposedly humorous pictures, because they insult and offend as often as they amuse. Avoid "queer tricks with the English language," and whenever possible, put a medium to heavy ruled line around your ad to make it stand out from the rest of the printed page.

Aside from an ability to state the facts about any product in a matter-of-fact manner, Bates had a real sense of style—a clear idea of what looked good and what didn't. Catalog covers designed by him are at once simple, exciting and elegant. He was active at a time when the applied arts themselves were going through a metamorphosis from the very fussy Victorian to the sleek and curvilinear Art Nouveau style—a trimmed-down visual statement that could read well, even if the printing process left something to be desired. Bates prided himself on selecting artists who could produce the style and mood best suited to the product.

He seemed to relish the give-and-take of correspondence from subscribers, and the opportunity to offer criticism of advertisements sent for his perusal, as well as to invent stories and fables to illustrate a point. He held endless contests to find the best ads sent in, and he had a standing offer to send a letter of critical analysis to anyone who would send him an ad or a specific question about the printing or advertising business, along with two dollars.

By 1905, however, even wider horizons were beckoning. He sold his advertising interests in order to devote himself to the promotion and financing of other enterprises. In the next five years he helped organize the Fidelity Bond and Mortgage Company, organized and became president of the Rutherford Rubber Company and helped to found the Colorado-Yule Marble Company. This was his biggest undertaking. It required a capital of ten million dollars to quarry and sell marble from the largest deposit of high-grade white marble known to exist in the world, the deposit in Gunnison County, Colorado. In quality it rivaled the Carrara marble of Italy and the Pentellic and Parian marbles of Greece. Development meant that the company had to build, equip and staff the largest single finishing plant in the world. It employed 700 skilled artisans and finishers. And Bates had to become president or vice-president of a couple of railroads that kept the operation in communication with the outside world. Although he was still going strong in 1916, I have found no record, so far, of when he died. But what tremendous creativity in everything he touched! He was a most remarkable man, living in a dynamic age.



A Short History of Wallpaper

We take wallpaper so much for granted today that it is often not a question of whether we are going to use it, but rather, which paper we will choose. Like so many things in every day use, it is easy to overlook. Wallpaper is quite perishable, tends not to last through the ages, and so has not been a particularly popular subject for historical research and evaluation. Until recently, little in the way of historical material had been written. And some of it has had to be conjecture because of the ephemeral quality of the subject. Hard facts about its early origins are surely shrouded in mystery.

But it seems reasonable, given the human instinct to decorate, that in idle moments or at times of creative inspiration, some people were moved to decorate the vertical surfaces around them. That had to be a fact of life. Over the ages only the form taken by that decoration has changed. We know that cave paintings exist. Ancient tombs have revealed painted walls. Colored tiles and bas-relief sculpture are evident on aged ruins.

Practicality produced some wall treatments—for example, hung skins kept out wintry winds. Those who could afford more had them decorated with painting, gilding or embossing. Tapestries cut down drafts in stony castles—the oldest one in existence dates back to William the Conqueror and is said to have been made by Queen Matilda and her ladies. Pictures painted on linen were for the less wealthy. In many of the early decorations, religious significance was probably emphasized. But the aesthetic secular appeal of line and color could not long be denied. Few could afford what everyone could appreciate; so when a cheaper way of achieving a similar result became available, its popularity was assured. For this reason, the early wallpaper-makers of Europe took pains to imitate woven tapestries and embossed leather.

Even so, there is no evidence that the use of wallpaper was universal until the late eighteenth century, partly because so few fragments have survived and partly because a good deal of time probably passed between the time paper for decorating walls became available and the ages when a broad segment of society could afford its use. And there probably was not an orderly transition from wallpaintings to leather hangings and tapestries to wallpaper as such. Rather there was a halting progression to decorating paper specifically to be used as wallpaper. In early Swedish homes, for instance, paintings and drawings hung on walls at holiday time were not considered to be permanent friezes, but they pointed in that direction. Block printed papers made by the “dominotiers” in France in the 1500s were simply a cheap way to make the overmantel in a peasant cottage a bit more pleasant. An English printer staining a design on old printed documents was trying to turn a small profit on waste paper. A widespread practice was to print sheets of paper with small designs and then to use them in boxes, as linings, and in books or pamphlets, as end papers or even covers. Sheets with the same designs were often redirected and used as wallcoverings. The “scratted” and “marbled” papers made in Italy and Holland were very popular for decorating stairway walls, dressing rooms and other spaces where more conventional wall treatment was considered to be an unnecessary expense. These papers often entered England as wrappings for toys and other import items, and thus avoided the tax imposed on imported paper. They were simply individual sheets, intended to be used one at a time; no attempt, therefore, was made to match edges to produce an overall design.

The earliest existing evidence of paper apparently planned and executed specifically as wallpaper was discovered in 1911 when some workmen were remodeling a room at Christ's College, Cambridge, England. They discovered the merest fragments of a paper covering the ceiling and beams, which could be dated to 1509 because it was printed over waste documents having to do with the accession of Henry VIII. Some quality of the ink had apparently preserved enough of the design so that a pinecone surrounded by foliage and strapwork could be recognized.

Once paper became sufficiently available, the processes for making wallpapers began to proliferate. The practice of printing on single sheets rather than rolls, and composing the design by putting them up side by side, continued until well into the 1700s. What was printed upon those sheets, and what kinds of materials were used, varied considerably.

They ran the gamut from plain black and white designs, through one or two colors stenciled on and adorned with a woodblock outline of the design printed in a dark color, to the flocked papers that looked and felt like fabric. This latter was a process originally developed to make cheap materials look more expensive, and was achieved by coating linen with a gummy glue, then sprinkling ground wool on this base. Whatever didn't stick was blown away, leaving a velvety surface to the fabric. Imitation tapestries could be created inexpensively by the careful application of different-colored ground wool. Wallpaper-makers in France and England also began using their blocks to print single designs in sticky varnish on the paper. The chopped wool they dusted over it then stuck only to the varnish. Later the pattern could be enhanced by handpainted or stenciled details.

The English were the first to lay on a solid ground color, then print a design over it. But all along, the manufacturers were plagued by technical problems. Water-resistant colors were not available until about 1780, and oil colors were expensive to use for mass production. Even the business of hanging paper was a tricky one. Usually the maker was also responsible for the installation. Many techniques were used, but usually the good papers were glued over canvas that was in turn glued onto battens fastened to the wall—a tricky business to accomplish without getting paste on the front surface and marring the design. Sometimes the paper was glued to a canvas panel stiff enough so that it could just be nailed to the battens with flat-headed nails. This eliminated the problem of the wet glue—if you didn't mind all those nailheads. I suspect that the battens were favored because they kept the paper away from the often damp walls.

Styles of wallpaper design, as with other things, changed with fashion. Sometimes the changes were influenced by technical developments, sometimes by other forces. Jean Papillon was the first one to cut blocks so that the design appeared in a continuous series of repeats. His papers, colored by hand with stencils, were popular in France from about 1688 until they were nudged aside by the English flocked papers, which began to appear on French shores about 1750. The English had been perfecting the making of flocks while French designers were exploring other areas.

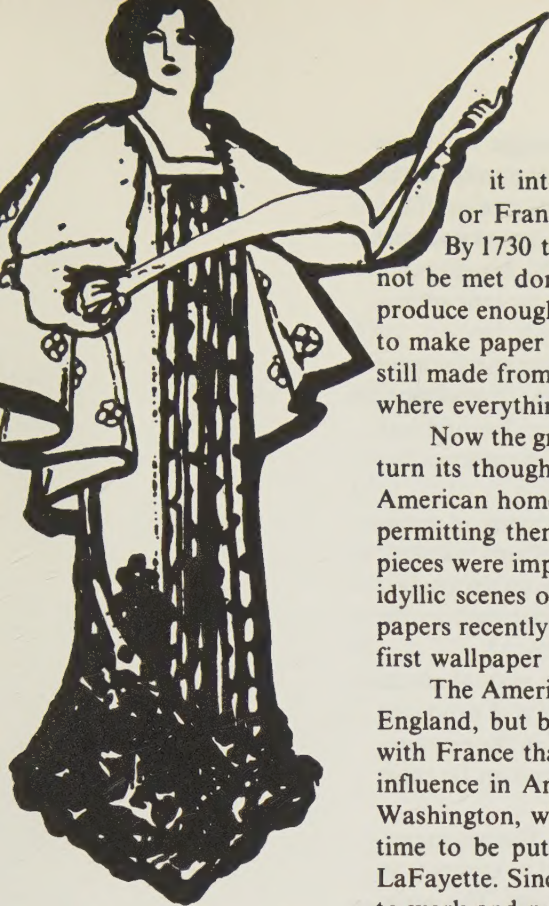
It was at about this time that trade with the Orient galvanized the West. Among the goods brought back by trading ships were oriental furnishings and artifacts—notable among these, Chinese paper hangings.

Historians seem to agree that the Chinese themselves didn't use wallpaper in the way that the Europeans understood its use. It was not one of the early items offered for trade. Rolls of paper painted with scenes of Chinese life were offered as gifts to ship's captains upon concluding a trade agreement. Back home, a captain had only to display the scenes, usually composed of about 25 strips, 4 feet wide and about 12 feet long, to create a demand. For on these papers were displayed things totally exotic to European ways of thinking. Trees and flowers, insects, birds, people, gardens, houses were drawn with brush strokes of masterful delicacy. Colors were brilliant and held their jewel-like tones. Three-dimensional perspective was ignored and events merely stacked: near happenings were largest and at the bottom of the panel, events in the middle ground were a bit smaller and higher on the page, and the background events were smallest and higher still. The strips did not show a repeat. Perhaps they were never intended to be shown side by side. But when they were displayed that way, they did present a more or less complete scene.

Word was carried back to the Orient that Europeans wanted to buy these papers, and so, apparently, an industry sprang up to meet the demand. Skilled painters and craftsmen were gathered together to produce the goods. They didn't always take to the idea of planning the design to register a repeat at regular intervals. A finished wall of oriental paper, therefore, might have children and kites floating around with clouds and birds and insects. The favorite themes were flowering trees with birds and insects flitting about, and perhaps a lattice screen or balustrade in the foreground; and scenes of Chinese life depicting everything from the cultivation of rice to figures playing mahjong at an outdoor fair. Exquisitely drawn, delicately colored, exotic to behold!

Since the demand could not be completely supplied from the trading ships, European designers began producing imitations. They often took a single figure or motif and worked





it into an over-all repeat pattern, flooding the market with Anglo-Chinese or Franco-Chinese designs.

By 1730 there was a lively demand in America for wallpapers—a demand that could not be met domestically because, oddly enough, the American population could not yet produce enough rags to support a papermaking industry. While other fibers could be used to make paper and were being experimented with, the great bulk of occidental paper was still made from fabric fibers. America was beginning to emerge from a frontier existence where everything, including cloth, had to be hoarded and used until it disintegrated.

Now the great metropolitan centers were beginning to support a population that could turn its thoughts from the necessities of existence to the accumulation of some luxuries. American homes were reported to be universally clean and neat, and circumstances were permitting them to be stylish, too. While furniture could be made locally, the really fine pieces were imported. In decorating, one could hire a local craftsman to come in and paint idyllic scenes on the parlor walls, the family itself seeing to the stenciled borders, or buy papers recently off the ships. Such a market permitted Plunket Fleeson to open America's first wallpaper manufactory in Philadelphia in 1739.

The American Revolution saw what proved to be a temporary decline in imports from England, but by then, there were several factories producing domestically. The close ties with France that were established during the Revolution fostered a blossoming of French influence in American decorative thought. One of my own favorite stories is of Martha Washington, who was vexed because French wallpaper she had ordered did not arrive in time to be put in place at Mt. Vernon to honor the visit of the great French general LaFayette. Since it finally arrived at about the same time as the marquis, he and George set to work and put it up for her. Pure Americana!

Meanwhile, back in England, the scenic papers were taking a new turn. A fellow by the name of John Baptist Jackson set up a factory to print panels of paper with scenes of classical ruins, statuary and landscapes, to reflect his many years of travel and art study in Italy. The papers were very expensive and durable, being printed in oil colors. Usually the scenes were displayed surrounded by printed frames and scrollwork on the wall.

Color printing was advancing, with the French printing one wood block on top of another to give a wider range of colors. Fournier began pasting pieces of paper together end to end, to make a continuous length.

The French Revolution was hard on a number of industries, but that of wallpaper survived happily, as a whole. There was one tragic case in which the Reveillon factory in Paris was destroyed by an angry mob over a misunderstanding about this great craftsman's attitude toward the wages of his workers. But generally wallpaper was conceived to be a proletarian industry, and the changes brought about by that bloody revolution were favorable to it.

By 1800 wallpaper was firmly established as probably the West's most popular way to decorate walls. The volume of traffic in it was yielding fine tax revenues to the English treasury. A tax was levied on each sheet of paper that was sold, another tax had to be paid for the privilege of coloring it (called "staining"), and the paper-stainer had to buy a yearly license to ply his trade. No wonder that the government resisted for thirty years the introduction of a French-invented machine for making "endless" paper—paper produced without seams or divisions.

With or without endless paper, scenic papers as well as all-over repeat designs proliferated. The scenes were taking on panorama-like aspects, with the entire room taken into consideration. The idea was to make it appear as though the viewer were standing in the middle of a landscape. Popular subjects were scenes from history, mythology or literature, and views of famous cities or countries. Entering a room, a visitor might find himself surrounded by the famous architectural landmarks of Paris, or progressive scenes from the myth of Cupid and Psyche. These papers were usually installed above a dado, wainscoting or printed balustrade. They were designed with a wide expanse of sky so that the top could be trimmed to fit the room without injuring the design.

The commitment in time and money necessary to publish an original edition of these scenic papers is startling, to say the least. A designer, visionary or entrepreneur had to set

the wheels in motion literally years before he could ever expect to sell a single set of the paper. After commissioning the artist and receiving the artwork, he had to commission the wooden printing blocks. These could number upwards of 1500 for a single design. They had to be top quality in order to stand up to the pressure of printing and constant washing down, because once made, they were kept in production for decades. The blocks were usually faced with pearwood, with fine lines of the design made of copper wire tapped into the wood. It could take two years or more to complete the set of blocks.

This commitment had to be made with no guarantee whatsoever that the investor would ever see a return on his money. And before he could hope to recoup his investment, the edition had to be sold for several years. If a scene was successful, however, it could stay in production for decades and often did, being updated from time to time by cutting a few blocks to change clothing styles, perhaps.

Jean Zuber and Josef Dufour were probably the most successful producers of scenic papers. Dufour's "The Savages of the Pacific Ocean," or "The Voyages of Captain Cook" (the name was changed), was issued in 1806 with a booklet of commentary on the design. This guide was very handy, since scenic papers were often an educational tool in the home—to teach the girls who weren't sent away to school.

Our book cover is an example of a scenic paper—on a more intimate scale than the grand vistas of Paris or Rome. It was designed by Charles Muller about 1854 and produced by one of the great French manufacturers, Desfosse et Karth. This panel is in the entrance hall of the Gallier House in New Orleans, Louisiana. Others are also known to exist, in Europe.

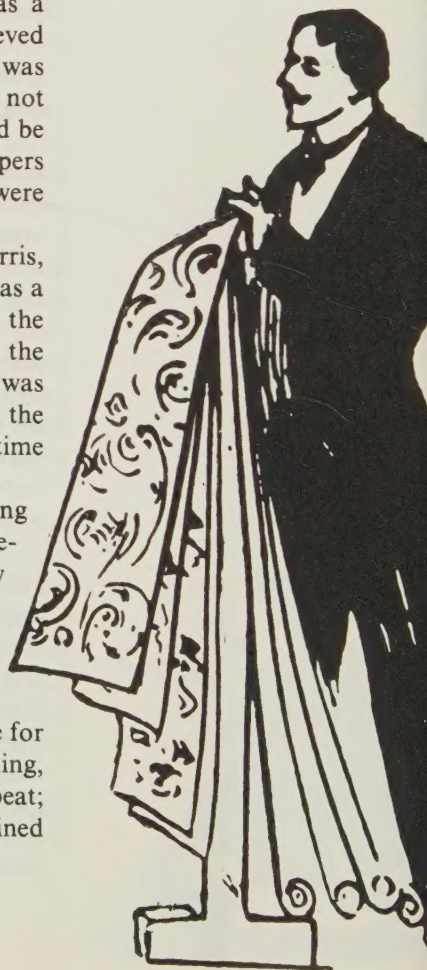
By 1830, wallpaper-printing machinery was being used in Germany, French manufacturers were printing their designs from engraved cylinders, and the need to compete in the world market forced the adoption of endless-paper machinery in England. The paper pulp was supported on wire mesh and fed onto equipment to press, dry and roll it. Within a few years, calico-printing equipment had been adapted for printing on paper.

The realization that mechanization was here to stay brought about a new attitude toward wallpaper, its nature and its function. The architect Augustus Welby Pugin demonstrated a good grasp of the facts when he pointed out that wallpaper was a legitimate additional way to treat wall space. While artists and technicians had achieved fantastic skill in making it look like hanging satin, woven brocade and broad vistas, it was no longer necessary for wallpaper to go around masquerading as those things. It was not cloth. It was not leather. It was not three-dimensional. It was a flat surface that could be mechanically decorated in any one of hundreds of ways. Pugin's designs for the wallpapers in the Houses of Parliament in about 1843 were two-dimensional designs. And they were fantastically well-received. Wallpaper had come into its own.

This attitude had a profound effect on later designers, particularly William Morris, who was the spiritual leader of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the mid-1800s. He was a serious-minded young man, intent on entering the ministry, when a trip around the continent to view the artistic glories of the past gave him a determination to "make the world more worth living in by bringing more beauty to everyday life." He felt that it was not necessary to make a choice between artistic merit or mass production—that if the machinery of mass production was used right, it could become an artistic tool. It was time for the design quality of the "lesser arts" of decoration to be improved.

Morris set up a business with several artist friends in 1861, and went about mastering the techniques needed to produce stained glass, decorated fabrics, painted tile, furniture-making, weaving. In fact, the printing of his wallpaper designs was about the only thing that Morris could not master. He handed that over to the craftsmen of Jeffry and Company, headed by Metford Warner, a man whose own feeling for quality in design led him to commission work from the most talented artists and designers of the day—and he inspired them to some of their best work.

Morris' philosophy of wallpaper design was simple: accept its mechanical nature for what it is. Then use every aspect of the machine to enrich the design: lines, gross-hatching, dots, all within a geometric simplicity. His designs always had a simple geometric repeat; but the stems and leaves and blossoms from nature that he so loved were so richly entwined



that the patterns looked much more complicated than they actually were. His sense of color, too, was influenced by nature. He found that only vegetable dyes could give him the subtle relationships that he desired. "Beauty mingled with invention, founded on the observation of Nature, is the mainspring of decorative design," he was quoted as saying.

Morris and his contemporaries laid to rest the argument of art versus mechanism. They proved that machinery could produce art. Ironically, in spite of their Socialist idealistic motivations, they never did produce products cheaply enough to be readily afforded by the great mass of people.

Along with Morris, other great designers left their marks. Charles Eastlake urged manufacturers to seek out good design and present it to the public, in an effort to educate their taste. Walter Crane's sumptuous papers featured exotic plants and colorful birds: cockatoos, peacocks, all managed with a careful use of color. These are some of the great designers, the great themes, that carried through the Victorian era. Their best work was featured among others at the great World Expositions in London and Paris in the latter half of the nineteenth century and have influenced our mental image of what wallpaper is today. The advertising illustrations on the following pages will give you a perception of that image.

R. J.



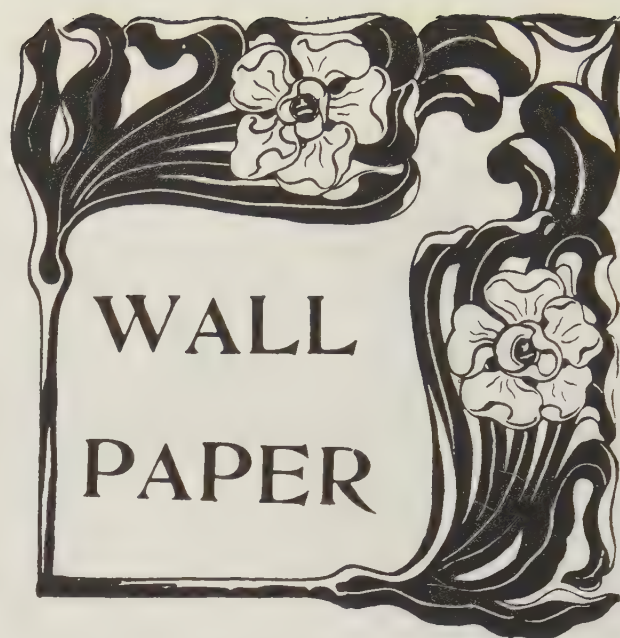
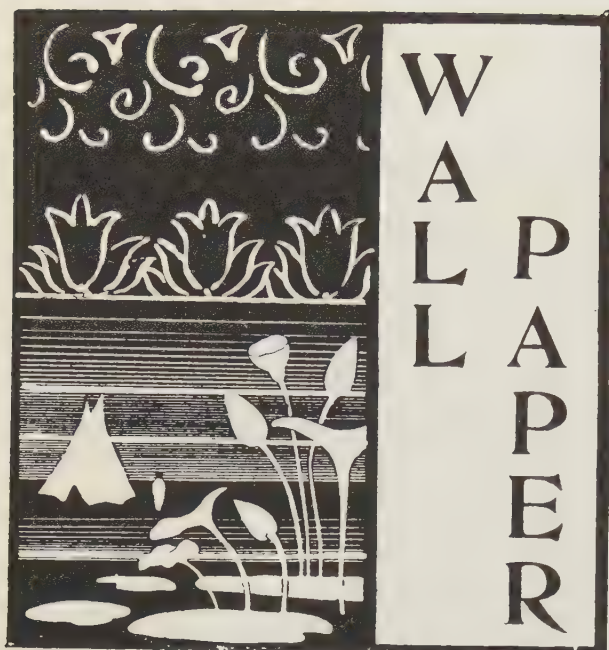


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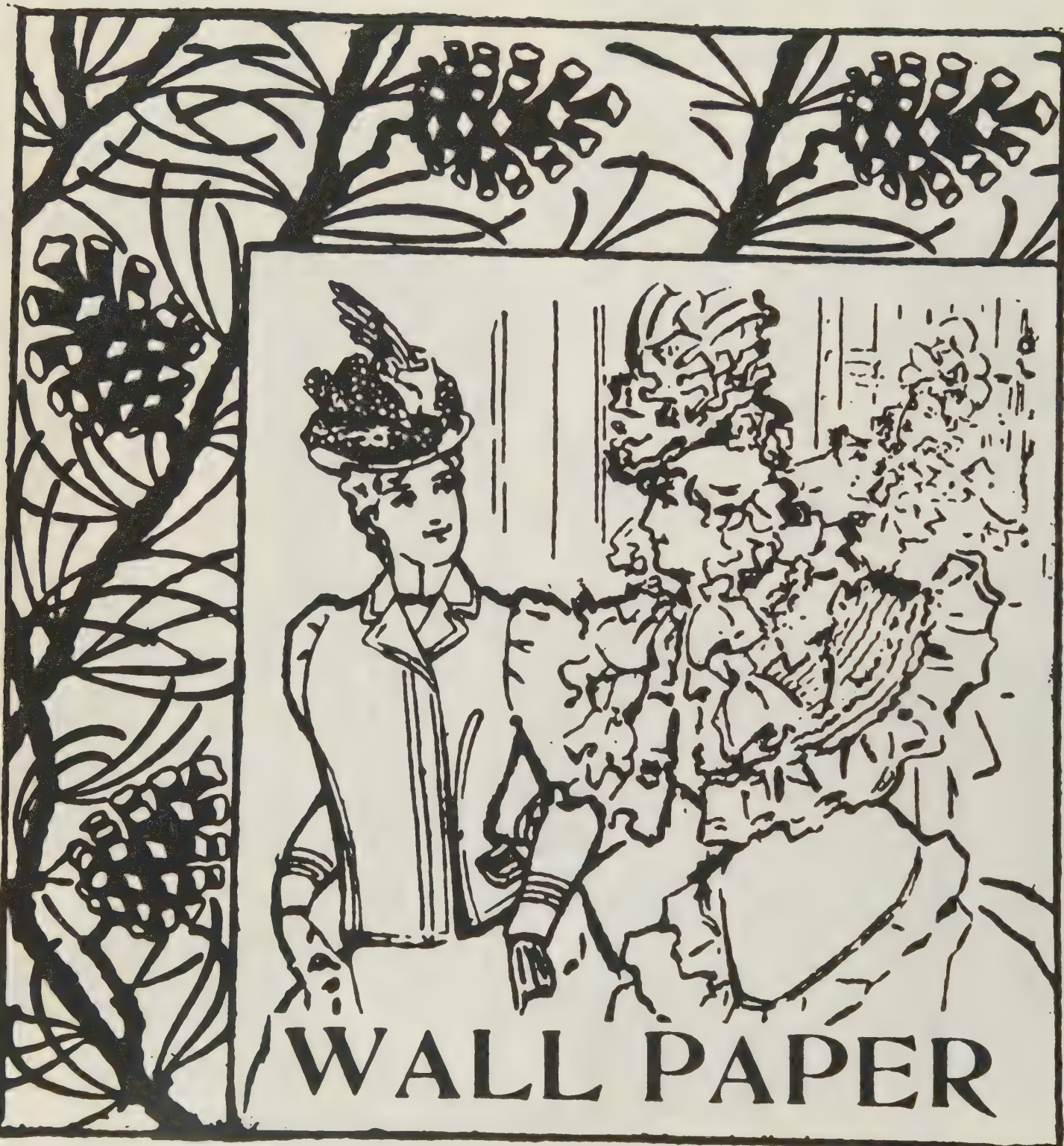






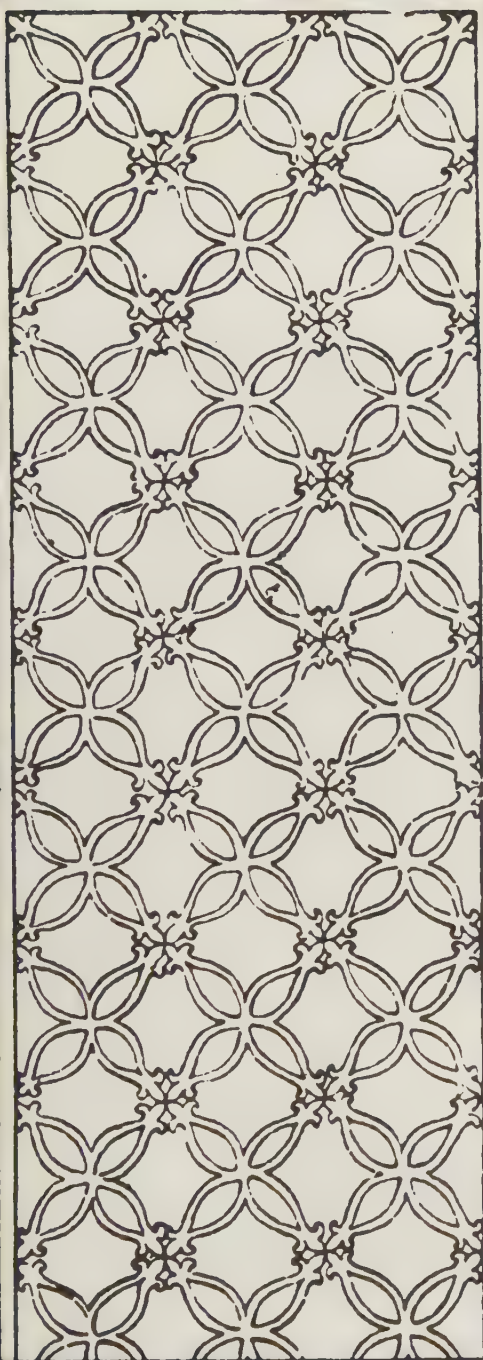


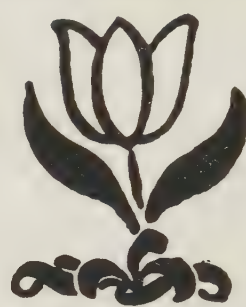




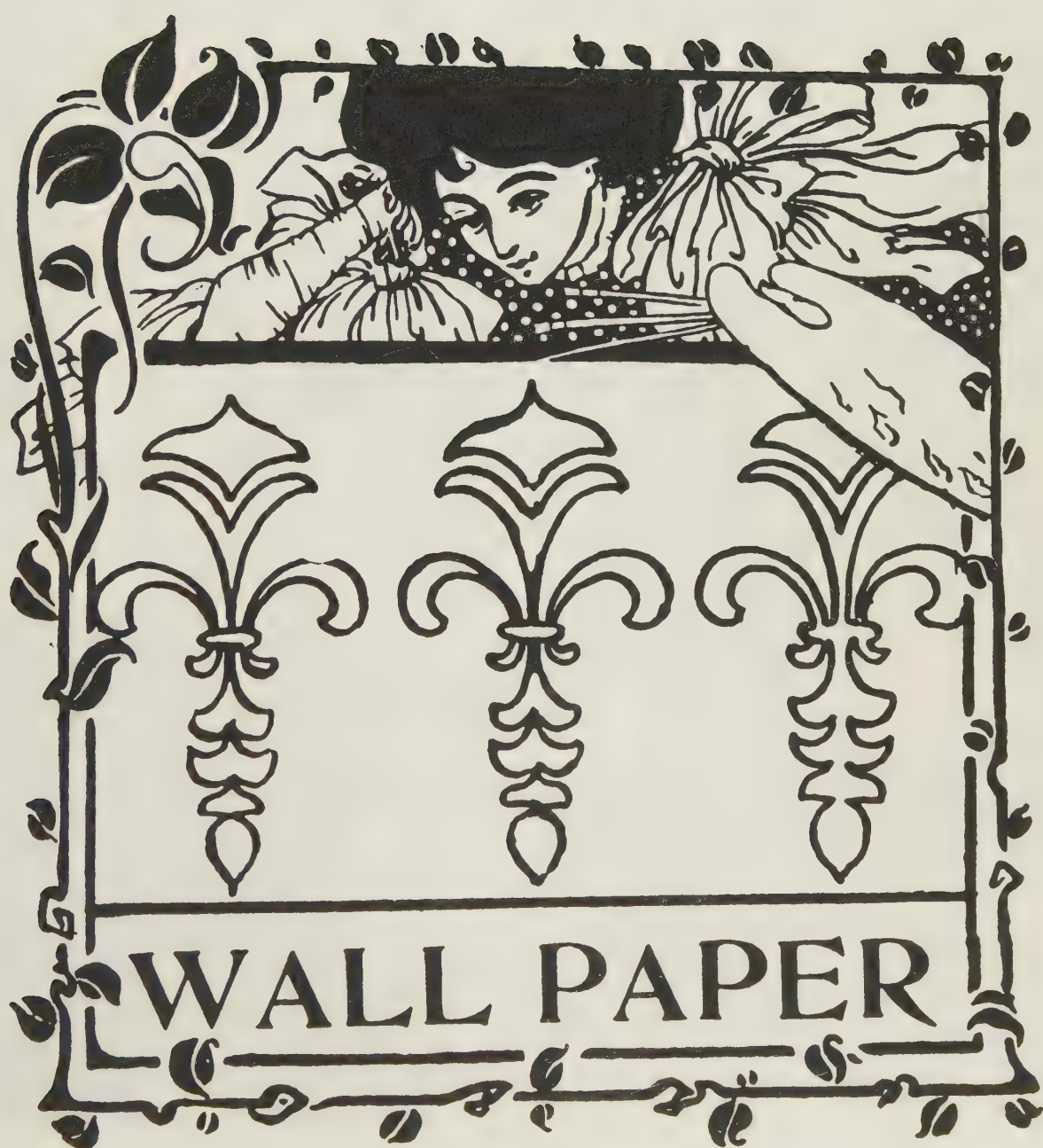


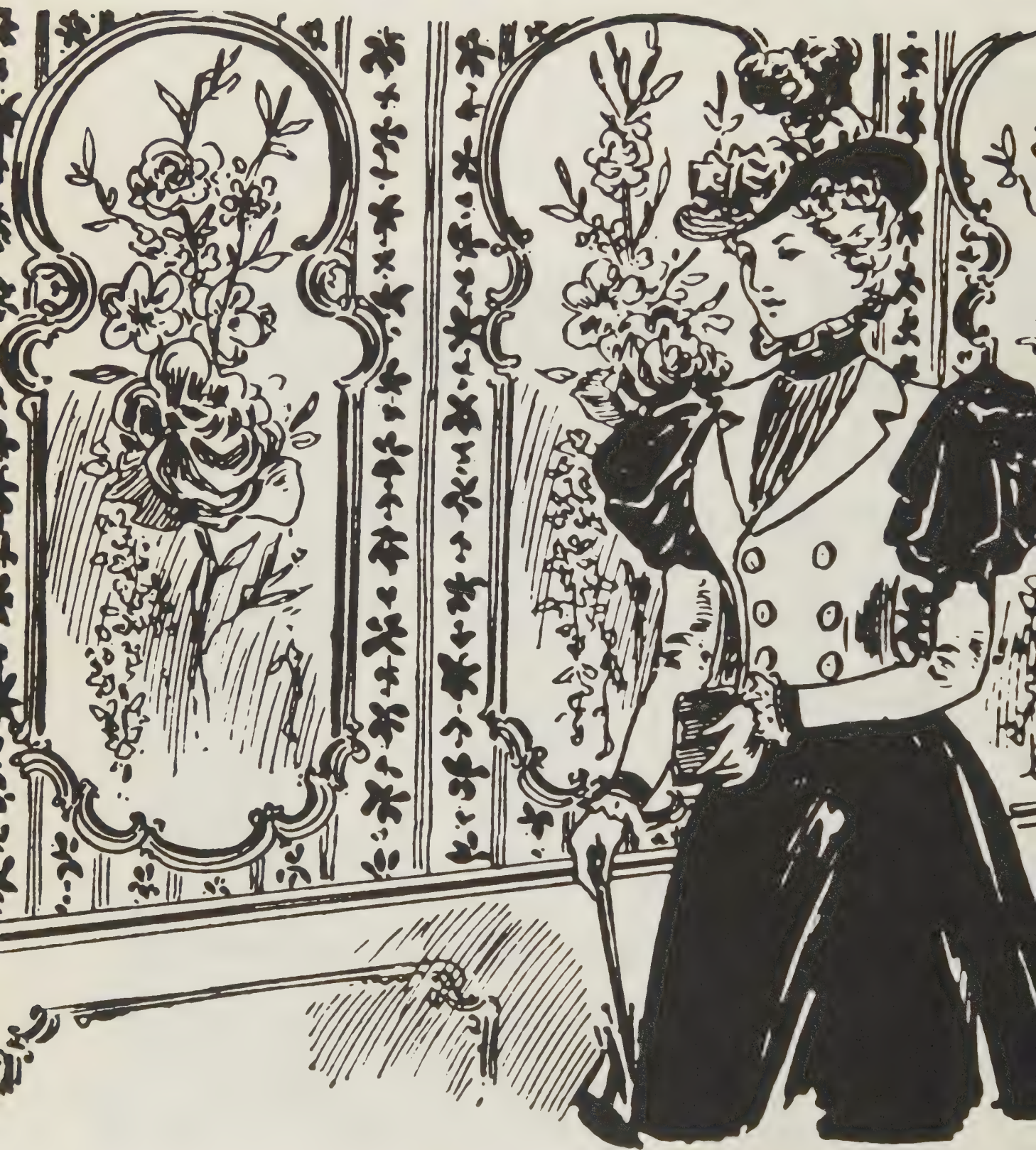






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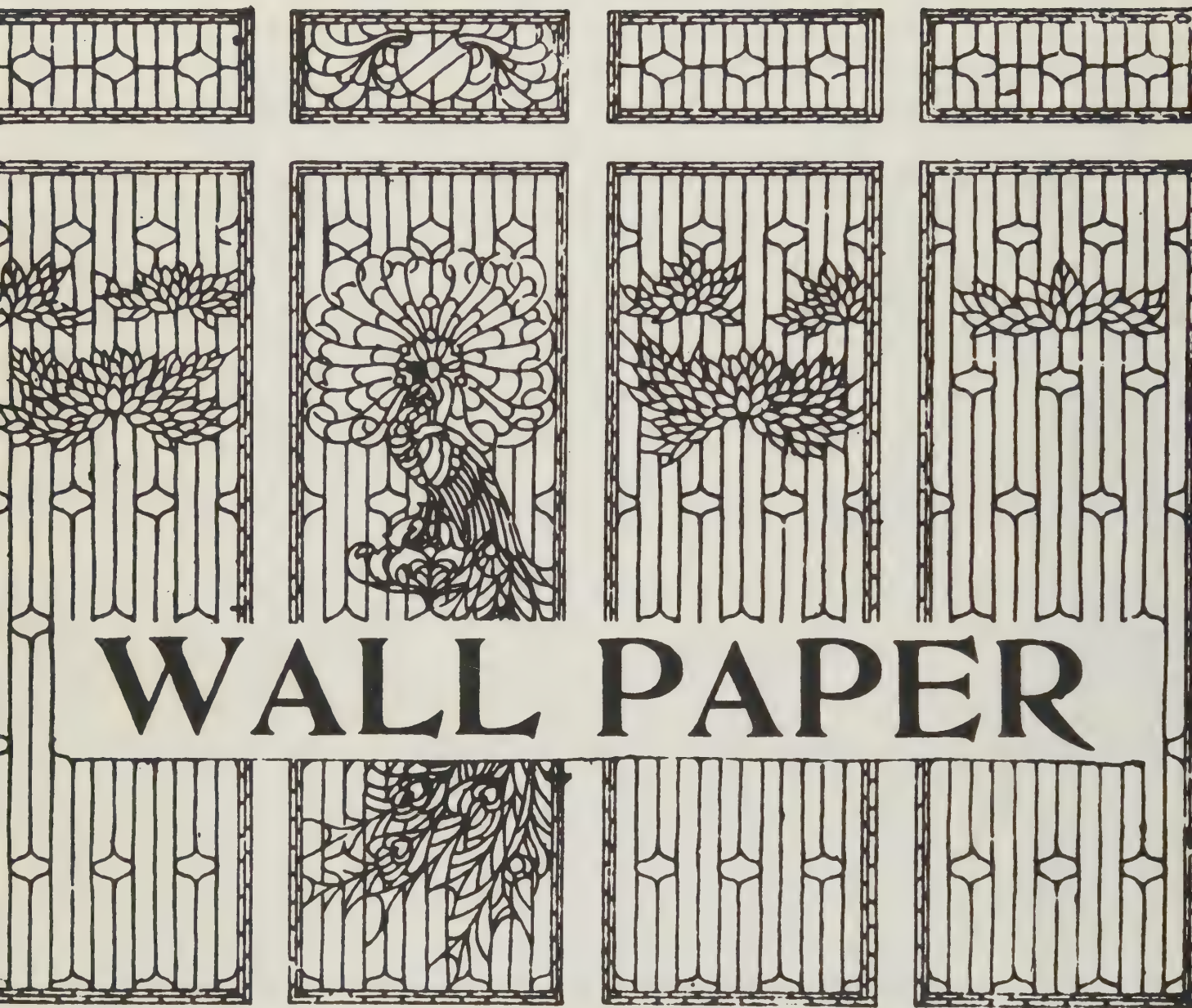






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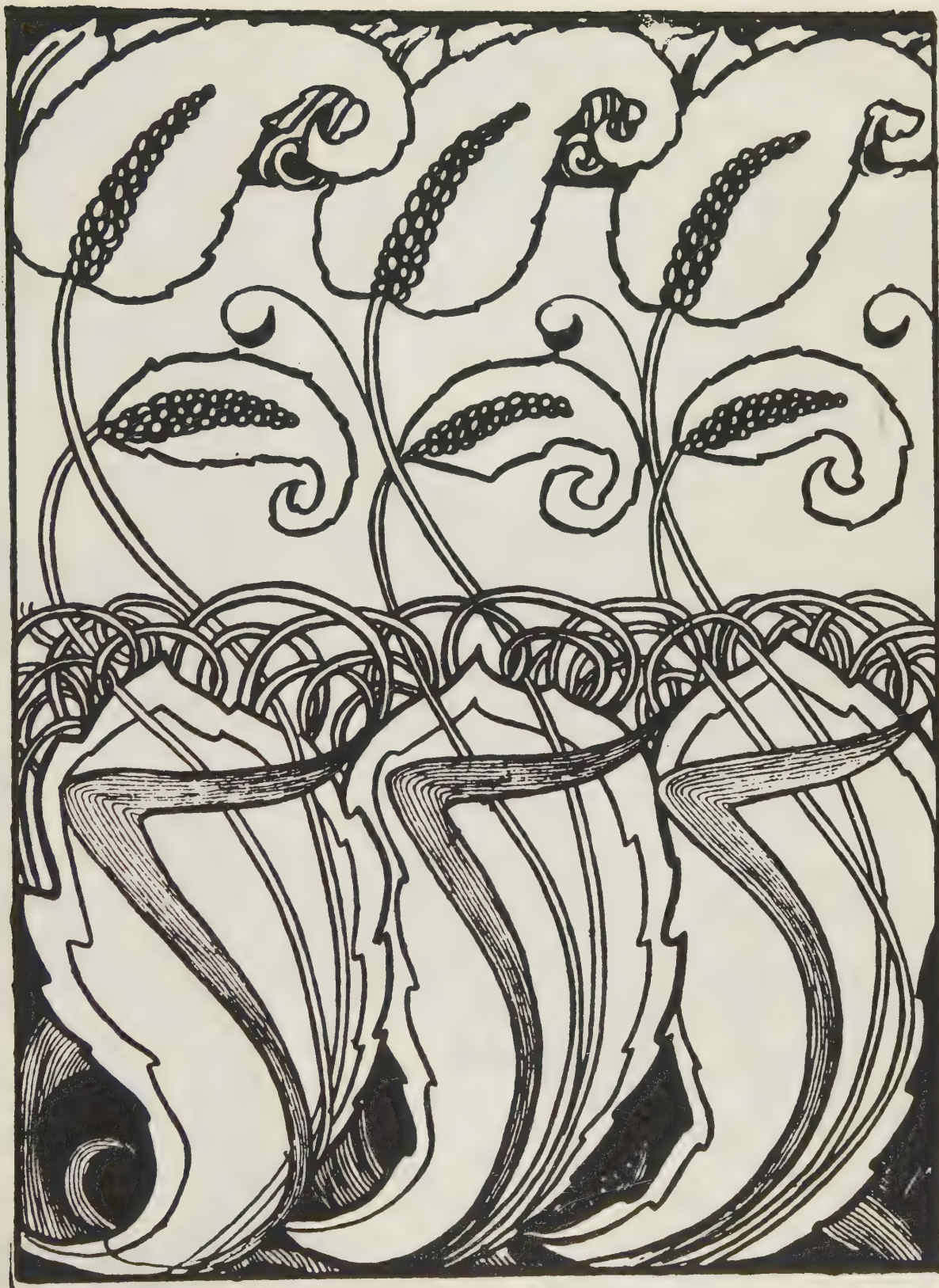


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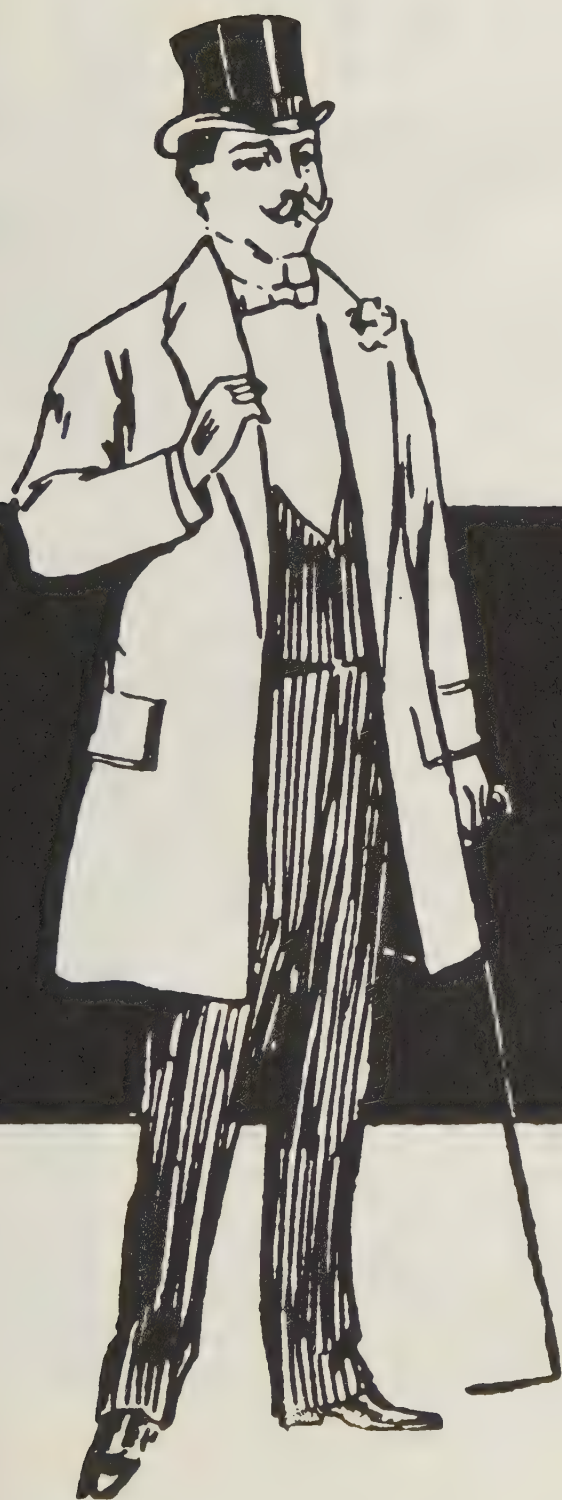




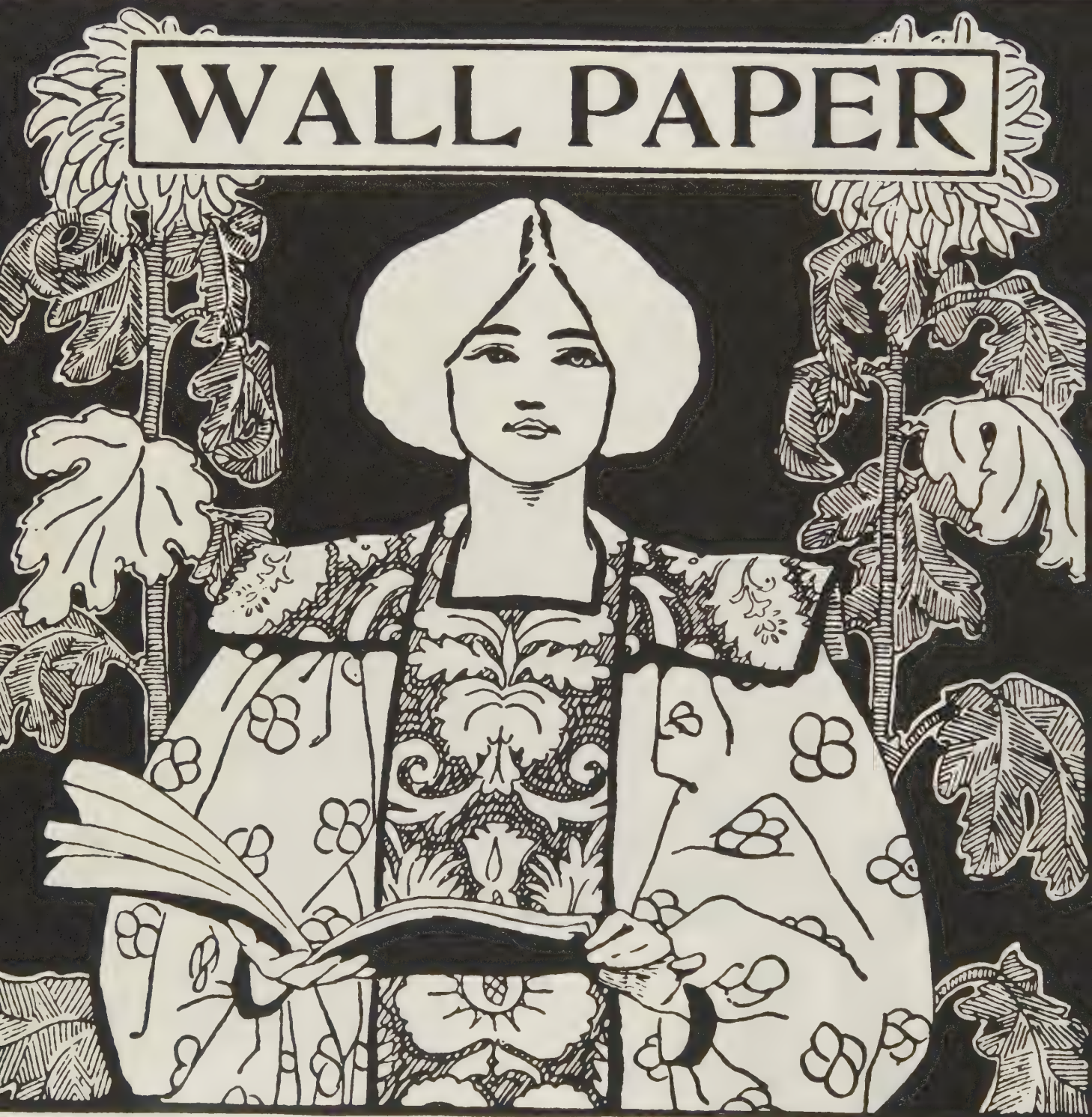








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Designed by Barbara Holdridge

Composition by the Service Composition Company,
Baltimore, Maryland

Covers printed by Rugby, Inc., Knoxville, Tennessee

Text printed by Universal Lithographers, Timonium, Maryland, on
60-pound Williamsburg Offset

Bound by Bindagraphics, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland

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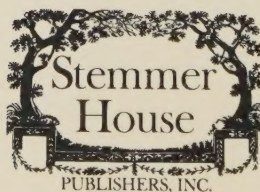
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Marvelously inventive, these period wallpaper designs were promoted to an eager Victorian public through newspaper advertisements, which we have reproduced in full throughout this book. Inviting advertising art directs our attention to pure Victorian and early Art Nouveau designs that should prove highly useful in creating wallpaper, decoupage, stencils and other art applications. Artists, craftspeople, designers and colorists will applaud this new contribution to the **International Design Library** series, described on the inside back cover.



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